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C O N F I D E N T I A L DHAKA 006297

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [BG](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: BNP/JI COALITION STRAINED BUT NOT BROKEN

Classified By: A/DCM D.C. McCullough, Reason(s): 1.4 (b)

1. (C) Calling Jamaatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) "de-railed romantics," BNP MP and party whip Rezaul Bari Dina told poloff that he didn't think that the attacks will continue. He credited the police's numerous arrests of key Jamaatul Islami Bangladesh (JMB) figures for stopping the bombings that have killed 31 persons since August 17. He saw no impact on the BNP/Jamaat Islami (JI) coalition government, saying it will continue. "It's power sharing and good politics," he said.

2. (C) He dismissed discussions about potential BNP/JI fractures, only admitting that any problems would be area specific, constituency by constituency. The BNP, he said, has its own strengths and "we can stand on our own two feet." But, as Prime Minister Zia has already stated, there is "no breakup for now." Asked if the BNP would give more ministries to JI, he said, "We have given them enough." He criticized the growth of madrasahs in the country, saying that they are more of a business nowadays, and the students have no dreams to improve the country, but only to be a student. The end result is that they only contribute to unemployment in Bangladesh, he said.

3. (C) He described Bangla Bhai and Abdur Rahman as "frankensteins," dismissing reports that BNP members have been protecting them. We have money and power, he said, "Why would we risk that to protect them?" Asked about accused terrorist Dr. Ghalib, he said, "I have no idea if he is guilty," but certainly he should not be released at all.

4. (C) He denied allegations that there are cracks within the BNP. Asked about factions within BNP resisting the increasing power of Tarique Rahman, he said, "They can't resist, it's an historical fact" and explained that dynastic politics are firmly ingrained in Bangladesh. He described himself as a "practical politician," and he comes from Bogra, the same area as the PM. He said he felt secure in his seat, having won in 1996, and again in 2001.

5. (C) In response to the terrorist attacks, BNP backbench MP's have generally echoed Dina's assertions that the BNP and the BNP/JI alliance can survive the JMB onslaught, provided it has truly come to an end. For example, BNP MP Fazlul Haque Milan told poloff that rumors of any JI link to protect JMB terrorists, such as alleged by ousted BNP member Abu Hena, is purely "personal opinion." BNP MP Mohamed Shahiduzzaman reiterated the point when he told poloff that while the BNP is politically affected by the attacks, if the attacks are stopped, then public confidence will be restored, and then, "BNP could go it alone."

CHAMMAS